BWT Primary Schools Communication Toolkit

Visual timetable

| Monday | circle time | choosing | snack | painting | story | lunch |

Why?

- Reduces anxiety: allows child to feel secure
- Supports spoken language
- Predictable - promotes routine
- Helps with transitions between activities
- Can prepare child/ren for changes in routine/unexpected events

| ? surprise | ? something different |
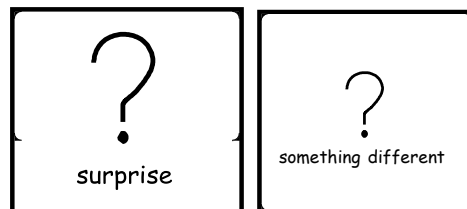
How?

- Use left-right or up-down
- Use photos, symbols or pictures
- Have it at child's height
- Talk through routine with child/ren
- Prepare for next activity
- Remove each activity as it finishes - ideally the child removes but it can be the adult; a "finished" box can be used
- Keep it up to date

Now, Next and then board

Now	Next	Then
Writing	Jigsaw	Reading

Why?

- Helps children with transition between activities
- Enables child/ren to feel secure
- Promotes routine and predictability
- Helps children who need information about more immediate events
- Can help to motivate children to complete a task
- Supports receptive and expressive language

How?

- Left-to-right
- "First" task to be followed by a motivating "next" task then another teacher choice "then" task
- Can be used with a sand timer to limit time on an activity
- Can be used continuously with activities by moving symbols along as they occur.
- Can be used for specific times or activities.
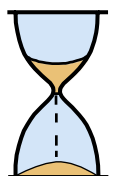
5 minutes

Mini schedule

Morning routine

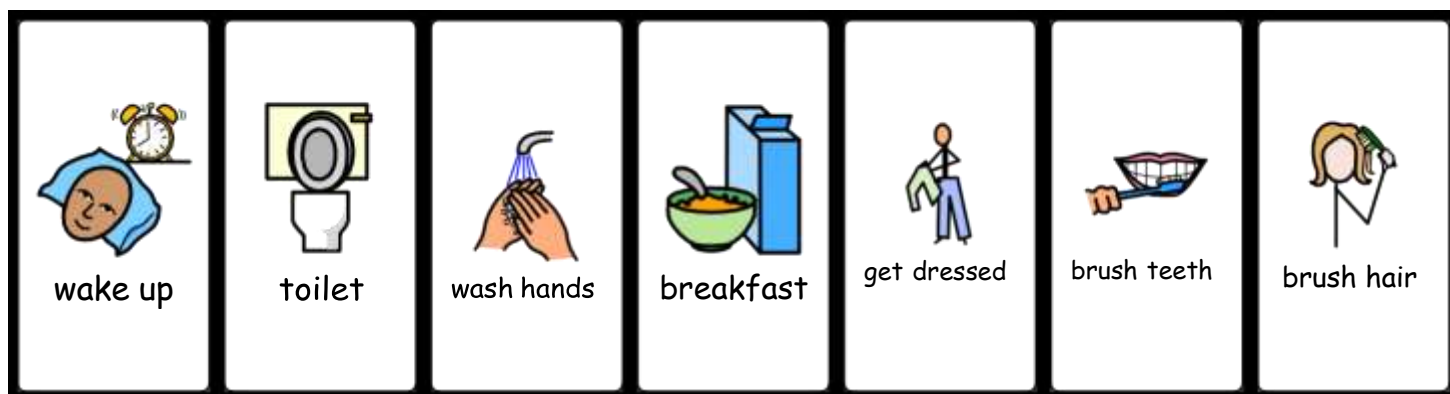| wake up | toilet | wash hands | breakfast | get dressed | brush teeth | brush hair |

Why?

- Promotes child/ren's independence
- Helps child/ren understand what steps to take tocomplete a task
- Helps with understanding of language and instructions
- Reduces anxiety and stress levels

How?

- Use for activities which may be difficult for child
- Use for activities which child/ren may be dependent onadult to support them
- Child/adult can remove/cover each symbol as each action is carried out so child/ren know what is left to do
- Display in the place where the activity occurs

Reward charts

I am working for....

⭐ ⭐ ☐
1 2 3
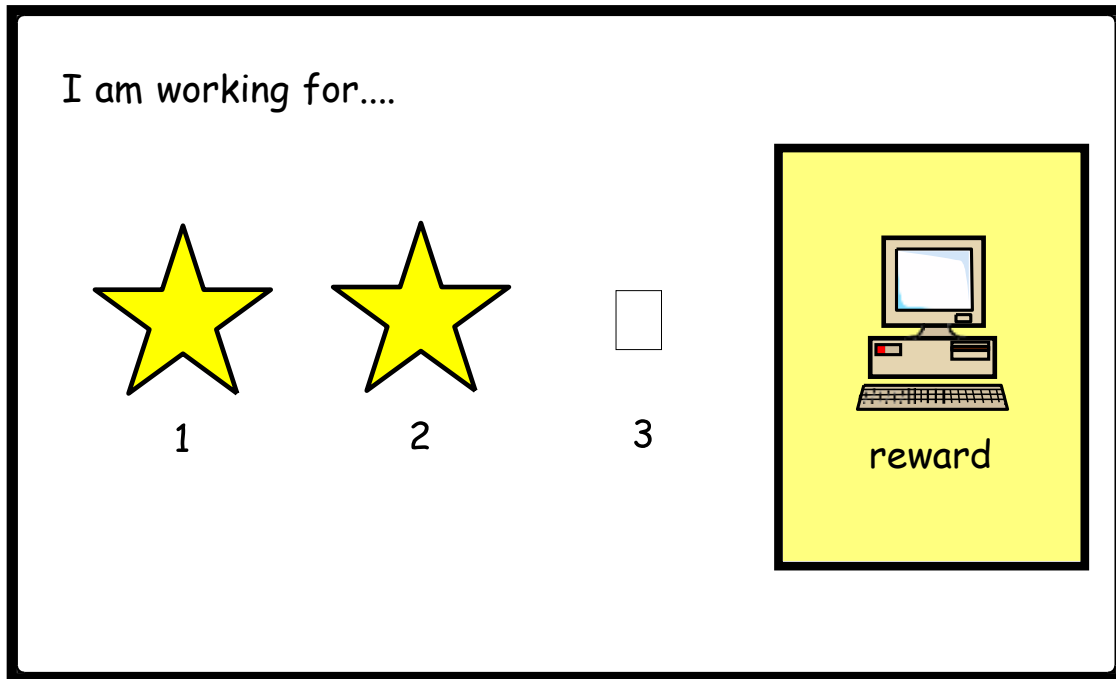
reward

Why?

- Motivating for children
- Promotes positive reinforcement of desired behaviour
- Supports spoken language
- Gives a more immediate reward for behaviour
- Satisfies the "What's in it for me (WIIFM)?" need that alot of children may experience

How?

- Reward positive behaviour immediately
- Build up "tokens" to a bigger reward
- Use a timer to limit time of reward if need be
- Start each reward cycle again once completed
- Choose a reward that is motivating - this may need to be unusual!
- The reward may need to be changed frequently as interest wanes

Signing

Would you like a drink?
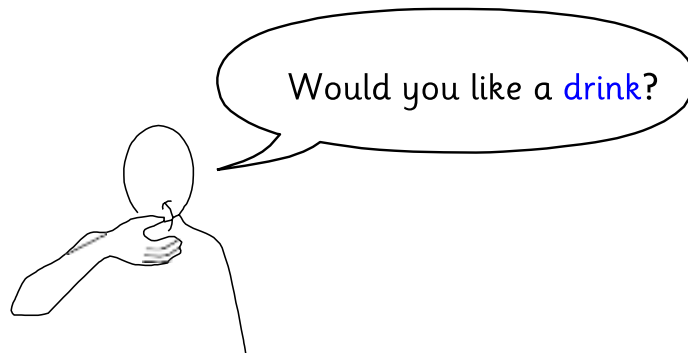
drink

Why?

- Supports spoken language, does not replace it
- Cues child/ren into context of activity
- Helps with understanding of expressive and receptive language
- Can help child/ren to develop and remember vocabulary

How?

- Sign key words in a sentence
- Use consistent signs/gestures
- Continue to use spoken language when signing
- Use to accompany popular songs and nursery rhymes
- Use it regularly or you will forget the signs!
- Have "key signs of the week" to help you remember signs and learn new signs

Choosing board

jigsaw

dolls

cars

sand

water

books

computer

painting
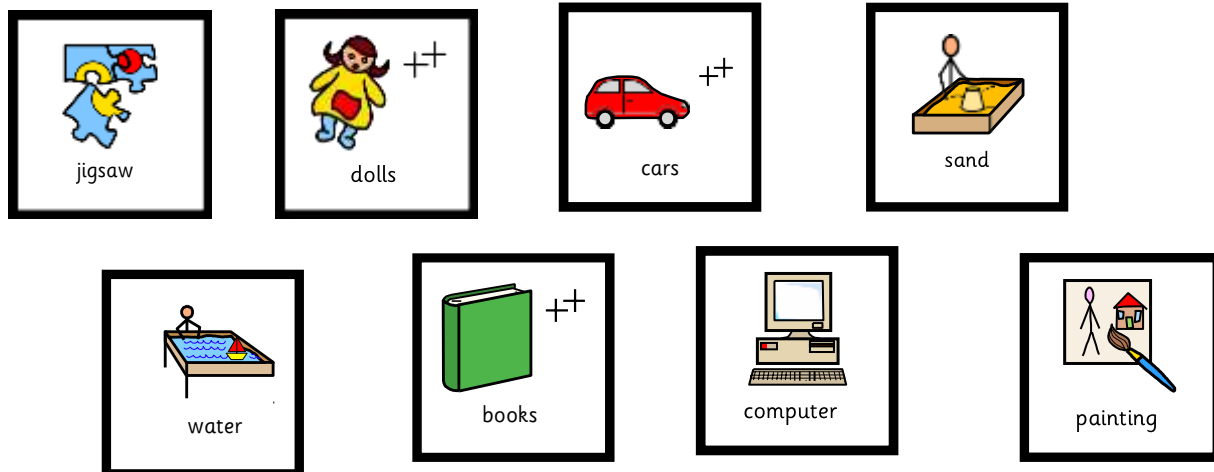
Jamie's choosing board

Why?

- Allows child/ren to make their own choices
- Allows for their interests
- Encourages independence
- Encourages children to try new activities
- Reduces anxiety of having "too much choice" available
- Helps children identify names of activities
- Increases child/ren's ability to stay focused on an activity

How?

- Display in same place so child/ren can return to it to make choices
- Number of choices can vary on child/ren's ability to make a choice
- Name choice s with child and encourage them to make a choice
- Child indicates choice by pointing, removing the symbol and handing to adult or taking symbol to activity to match it
- Can be used for child to make several choices and placed on a mini-schedule (see below)
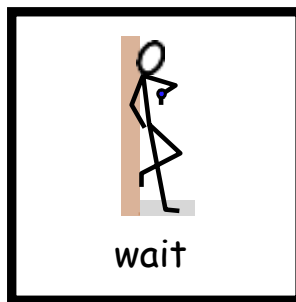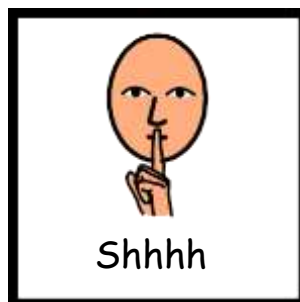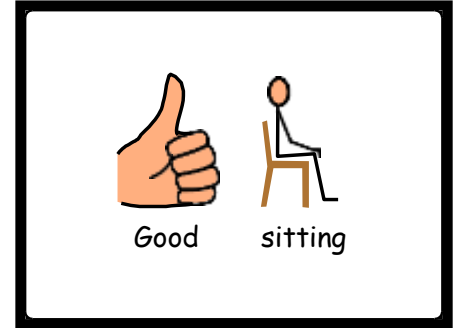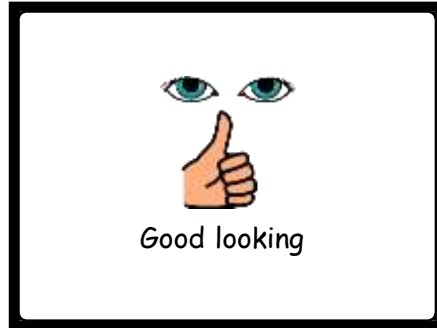- Can be used with a sand timer to limit/extend time on each activity

My choices

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   finish

3 minutes

Visual support cue cards

Good listening	Good looking	Good sitting

Shhhh	wait

Why?
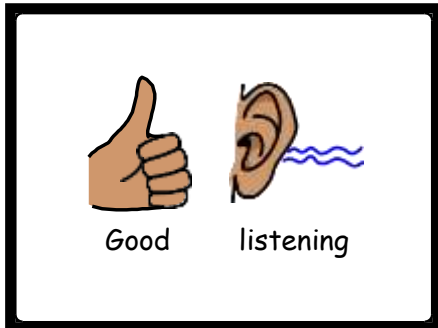
- Helps child/ren to understand expectations
- Helps all adults to communicate same message to child/ren
- Does not draw attention to child/ren in group times -instead draws attention to the desired behaviour
- Can be used discreetly with child/ren; less confrontational

How?

- Placed around room or where activity requires that behaviour
- Placed on a key ring for adults/child/ren to carry around with them
- Reinforce the desired behaviour by referring to the cue cards and reminding child/ren verbally, pointing, looking or combination of all three!
- Praise child/ren who demonstrate desired behaviour and refer to cue cards to reinforce their role

Signs and visual reminders

stop	computer	ask adult	OK
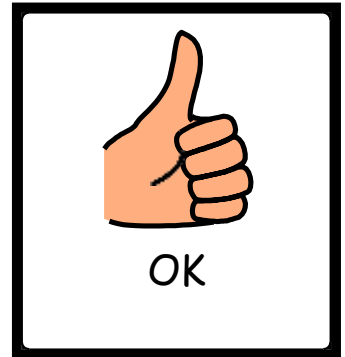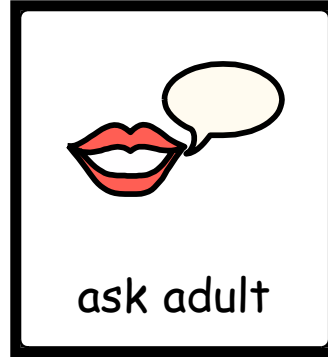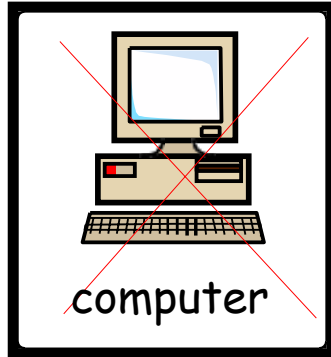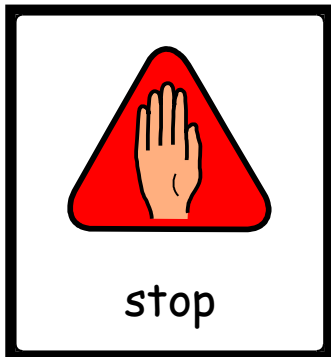
Why?

- Can help child/ren to understand about "rules"
- Differentiate which toys/equipment child/ren can use themselves or to ask an adult first
- Avoids the child/ren being told "No" a lot!
- Supports child/ren's ability to be in control of their own responses and behaviour
- Helps child/ren to understand when they can or cannot access certain activities, e.g. computer
- Stop sign can help to keep child/ren safe

How?

- Display in relevant areas
- Display on relevant toys and activities
- Talk through the symbols with child/ren and what the symbol means
- Adults to reinforce the symbol with child/ren over a period of time
- Praise the child/ren who respond appropriately to the symbols

Task organisers

Why?

- Reduces anxiety associated with remembering things
- Promotes independence
- Supports understanding of language
- Visually supports the meaning of a general instruction, e.g. "Get ready for home time."

How?

- Use symbols, photographs or pictures
- Left-to-right or up-down
- Remove or cover symbols/pictures as each item is retrieved or activity is completed
- Adult to role model how to use task organiser
- Praise child/ren who use organiser successfully
- Use for a range of activities where child/ren may have difficulty remembering order or organising self

Hometime

I need....

coat

bag

lunch box
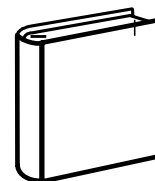
book

Photo books

Why?
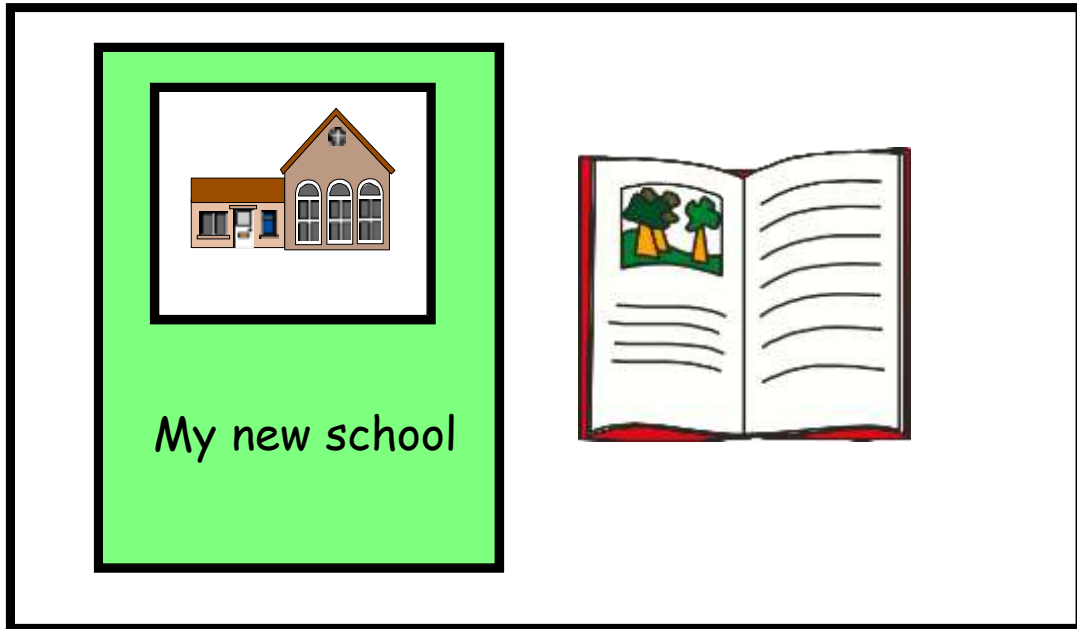
- Supports child/ren with transitions
- Reduces anxieties associated with change
- Personalised to the child/ren own experiences
- Can help child/ren remember an experience, e.g. visit to farm
- Can help child/ren to understand social situations
- Can help develop vocabulary and understanding of language

How?

- Use photos of key places/people
- Use simple language to support the photos
- Read through book with child/ren either to prepare them or trigger their memory

Examples of photo books

- My new school
- My family
- Our visit to City Farm
- Good things to do at snack time

Sand timers

Why?

- Helps prepare child/ren for transition between activities
- Encourage child/ren to develop concentration skills
- Help child/ren to understand how long they need to focus for
- Can aid motivation
- Develop an understanding of time
- Avoids direct negotiation between adult and child/ren

How?

- Use to prepare child/ren for when an activity will end/begin
- When child stays on task for duration of sand timer, praise and reward
- Build up from 1 minute to longer (if appropriate)
- Start with shorter duration that child can manage to promote success.

Picture Exchange Activities

Please note: Practitioners should check with their local Speech and Language Therapistbefore using this strategy
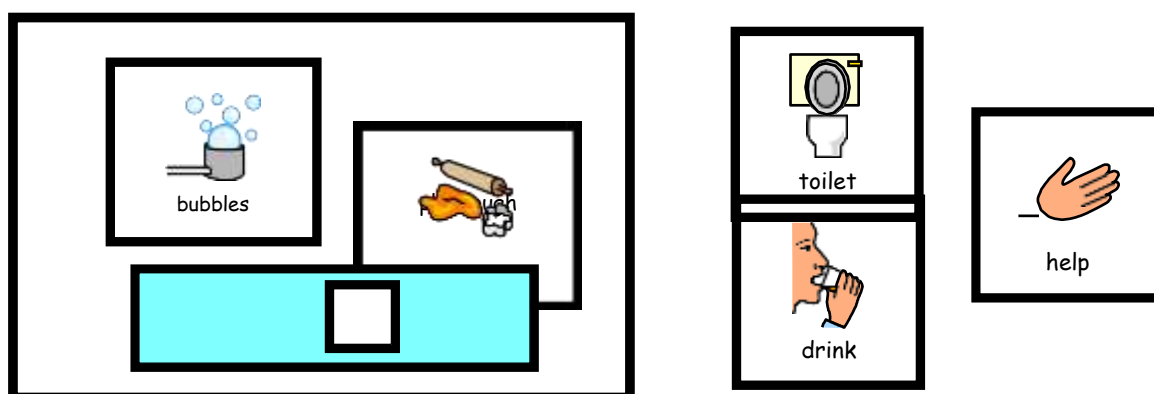
Why?

- Aids communication for children who are non-verbal or have speech and language difficulties
- Motivates child/ren to communicate
- Encourages child/ren to initiate communication
- Personalised for child/ren's interests and needs
- Can be transferred to other situations
- Instant reward/response given when communication takes place
- Focuses on relevant and meaningful communication

How?

- Provide structured picture exchange activities with motivating reward/item - little and often is best
- Key adult to withhold the motivating object
- Other adult/s to role model how to exchange picture with key adult in order to get what they want; key adult hands over object when picture is handed over to them (you may repeat this over a period of time)
- Supporting adult to use hand-over-hand with child to encourage them to hand over picture (you may repeat this over a period of time)
- Encourage child to hand over picture independently
- Encourage child to use picture exchange in and around the environment, not just at the structured times (this may just be with one picture)
- Add more pictures and objects
- Use photographs, symbols or pictures
- Extend to use with sentence strip "I want..." and ask question "What do you want?"
- Extend to use with other questions and sentence strips, e.g. "What do you see/hear?"

True Object Based Icon (TOBI)

Why?

- An object schedule is often used on a visual schedule when an individual finds it difficult to understand gestures, spoken words or has a complex learning need
- A TOBI is a picture cut out in the shape of the object or scanned; that helps an individual transition
- These can be adapted as the child or young person learns the system.
- Carefully chosen objects are used consistently and routinely to enable the autistic child or young person make a connection between the object and the activity it symbolises.

How?

- TOBIs are usually true to size.
- The cut out/scanned shapes allow the individual to both clearly see the object and feel the outline of the shape.
- Like all visual schedules, it is good practice when using TOBIs to present it to the individual consistently, using the same spoken language and presented immediately before the activity it represents.

Objects of Reference

swimming

cooking

music room

Why?

- Children can reach or touch object
- Provide a concrete example of an association with an activity or place
- Good for child/ren who find signing, photographs, pictures or symbols too abstract to understand

How?

- Objects are used as a means of communication
- Objects are used which are associated with an activity, event, place or even people, e.g. trowel for the gardener
- Use to prepare child/ren for an activity prior to it happening
- Can be displayed in a sequence for daily events (timetable)
- Can be used to aid memory of sequences, e.g. days of the week
- Use objects in a number of ways:
- Objects which are used in the activity, e.g. show rubber duck which will be used in the bath by the child/ren
- Objects not used in the activity, e.g. show wooden spoon mounted on to card
- Objects with a shared feature, e.g. child shows a small sample of material which a cushion is made from to request sleep
- Miniature objects of the real thing, e.g. doll's house furniture
- Abstract objects, e.g. child hands over a plastic cube to request garden time

Carpet markers, tiles and cushions

Why?

- Helps child/ren who have difficulty with spatial awareness

- Guides child/ren where to sit

- Reduces anxiety of having to choose where to sit

- Allows adult/s some control of where to place child/ren avoiding distractions or personality clashes

- Encourages awareness of personal space

How?

- Explore with child which type of "marker" they prefer to use

- Use a cushion/carpet tile in the same place on carpet/floor OR

- Use a cushion/carpet tile to mark where the child can sit in that session

- Use marking tape/chalk to mark out area where child/ren can or cannot sit

- You can also use with a sand timer to encourage the child/ren to sit for a certain length of time (see information sheet on sand timers for further information)

- Praise/reward the child/ren for sitting well in their special place

Word Mats

Industrial Revolution Word Mat

economy			Vikings	
industry			Anglo Saxons	
infrastructure			city	
manufacturing			map	
migration			Queen	

Why?

- Supports children with writing unfamiliar words
- Can be bespoke to topics, or generic e.g. High Frequency Words
- Use of pictures to support reading of the words

How?

- Use of photos/symbols or pictures
- Personalised to the topic or focus for writing
- When being given to a child who will find reading the words difficult, read the words to them before they are expected to write and use them

Core Boards

Why?

- Support children who cannot communicate verbally

- Gives a means of communication for non-verbal students

- Use of pictures to support

How?

- Use of photos/symbols or pictures

- Core words that support everyday communication

- Verbal language, signs, gestures, or real objects can be used alongside core words to expand or clarify a message.
- Can be tailored to different situations/needs

Social Stories

Why?

- Social stories present information in a literal, 'concrete' way
- They help improve a child's understanding of a difficult or ambiguous situation or activity
- They can help ease anxiety
- Promotes positive reinforcement of desired behaviour
- Social Stories follow a logical sequence, providing information in a positive, simple and clear manner
- Encourages positive discussions about key situations

How?

- Social stories can be used with small groups, whole class or as a 1:1 intervention
- Social stories need to be engaging, simple and clear
- The pictures and content of each social story can be adapted to meet the individual needs of the child

Work Schedules

Why?

- A way to communicate a series of events
- Understandable and meaningful to a child
- Differentiated is based on visual processing

How?

- 'Now and Next' or Individual
- Repetition
- Predictable routines
- Visual
- Reduction of language

- Depicts the AREA not the ACTIVITY

Attention Autism

Why?

- To engage attention
- To improve joint attention
- To develop shared enjoyment in group activities
- To increase attention in adult-led activities
- To encourage spontaneous interaction in a natural group setting
- To increase non-verbal and verbal communication
- To build a wealth and depth of vocabulary
- To have fun!

How?

- The Attention Autism programme progresses through a series of stages, building on each skill level.
- Each new stage is introduced when the group is ready to expand attention skills.
- Not all stages should be done if the child is not ready, start with stage 1 and gradually increase when the child is ready.

| Stage 1: Focus	Stage 2: Sustain	Stage 3: Shift	Stage 4: Transitions
The bucket	The attention builder	The interactive game	The table top activity
The aim is to build up to a single channelled attention level in a short adult directed activity	The aim is to be able to shift and sustain attention, and show emerging skills in anticipation	The aim is to teach the child to shift their attention as they and others take turns	The aim is to teach the child how to shift and refocus their attention for an individual activity and then back to a group activity

Colourful Semantics

Why?
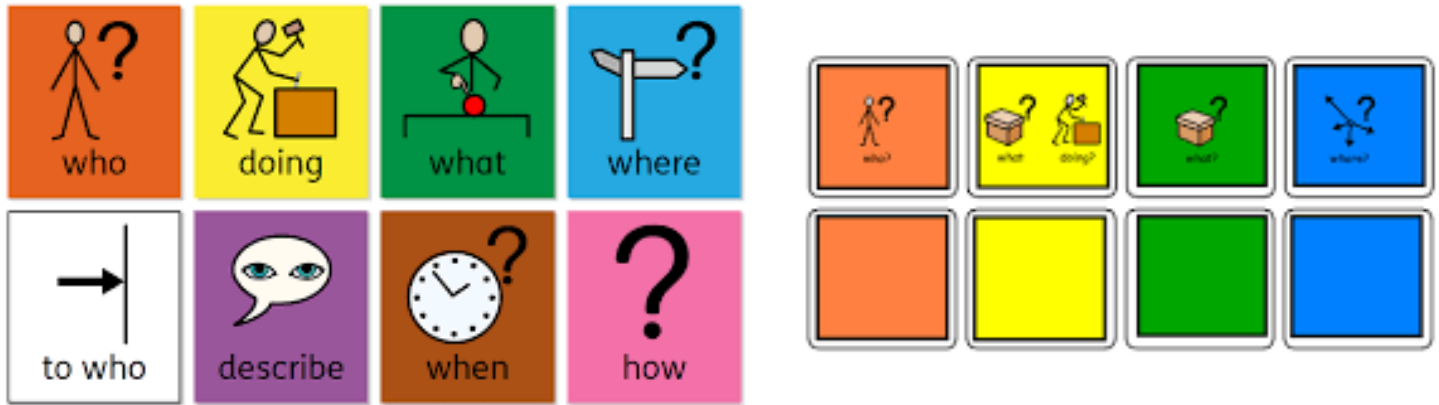
- Helps children to develop their grammar
- Rooted to the meaning of words
- Colour scheme relates to the type of words in a sentence-
- Helps to understand about word types
- Helps develop sentence construction
- Can start simple and build up

How?

- Colours specific to word types
- Colour code the words to build the sentence
- Use pictures and phots to motivate the student/use of widget
- Prepare resources needed in advance
- When introducing a new colour for a new element, focus on this in isolation with the learner before adding to the sentence strip
- Use of cards so can be moved to build the sentence for more practical learners.

Shape Coding
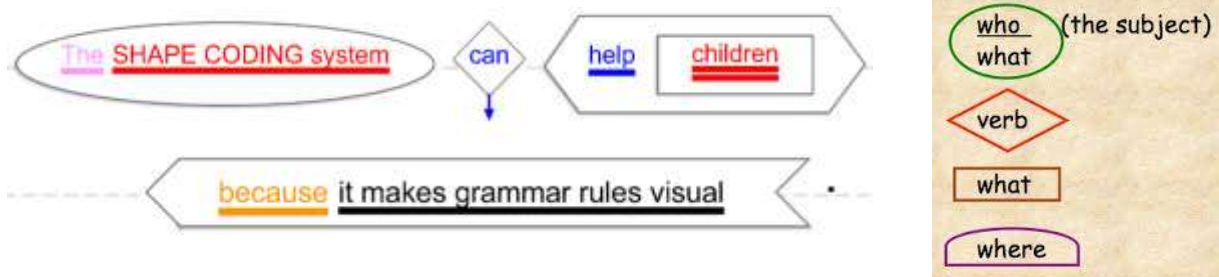
Why?

- Shape Coding was designed to teach spoken and written grammar to children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD).
- Shape Coding uses a visual coding system to show the rules for how words are put together in sentences, to develop the child's understanding and use of grammar, so that they can communicate more effectively.
- The primary focus is on oral language, but it can also be used to develop written language

How?

- The shape coding system includes use of shapes (syntactic structures), colours (words classes), lines (singular vs. plural and gender) and arrows (tense and aspect).

- It aims to be able to represent most aspects of English grammar and is therefore flexible enough to be used from the very early word combinations to complex structures.